



The more there is to read, the less your audience will want to read it.

Make sure your **writing is short.**

20 Keep sentences to **20 words or fewer**

5 Keep paragraphs to **5 sentences or fewer**

No one wants to read a wall of words.

Most readers skim documents instead of reading every word. Help your readers get your main points.

1 Include a **short, clear main message** at the top of your document

7 Use short paragraphs and bulleted lists. Keep lists to **fewer than 7 items**, and don't use sub-bullets

1-3 Use a **relevant** and **specific heading** for every **1-3 paragraphs**

For example: "ATSDR Study Looks at Lead Contamination"
Instead of: "Overview"

Passive voice is wordy, but active voice is concise and direct. Passive voice is formal, but active voice sounds more like speech (*making it easier to understand*).

Passive: "About 500 homes were left without water as a result of the chemical spill."

Active: "The chemical spill left 500 homes without water."

Use passive voice only when the **subject is unknown** or of **less importance**

Strengthen your sentences further by **keeping the subject and verb close together**